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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 17 September 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Macedo ..... (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Election of officers

1. **Mr. Dumitriu** (Romania) nominated Mr. Hrbáč (Slovakia) and **Mr. Tserenpil** (Mongolia) nominated Mr. Chun Hae-jin (Republic of Korea) for two of the posts of Vice-Chairman.

2. *Mr. Hrbáč (Slovakia) and Mr. Chun Hae-jin (Republic of Korea) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.*

3. **The Chairman** said he hoped that the Committee would be able to take up the election of the other Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur at its next meeting. He called on the relevant regional groups to intensify their consultations on the matter.

Organization of work (A/C.4/53/1; A/C.4/53/L.1)

4. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to document A/53/250, which set out the rules and recommendations of the General Assembly concerning the work of the Main Committees, including the scheduling of meetings, explanations of vote, rights of reply, points of order, records of meetings, concluding statements, resolutions and programme budget matters.

5. He intended to convene and adjourn meetings of the Committee on time. During the fifty-second session of the General Assembly the Committee had lost 22 hours owing to the late start and early ending of meetings. Meetings would be convened only when there were sufficient speakers inscribed on the list of speakers, particularly since resources allocated to a meeting cancelled with sufficient warning could be redeployed to other meetings. Draft resolutions, draft decisions and amendments, and the names of the sponsors thereof should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing, in order to ensure accuracy and avoid any possible misunderstandings. Requests for the use of conference rooms for group meetings should also be submitted in writing as early as possible.

6. In view of the number of agenda items and the limited number of meetings made available to the Committee, he suggested that members should not exceed 10 minutes when making statements in general debates and 15 minutes when speaking also on behalf of other delegations.

7. *It was so decided.*

8. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the letter dated 15 September 1998 from the President of the General Assembly containing the list of items allocated to the Committee (A/C.4/53/1) and to the note on the organization of work (A/C.4/53/L.1), which contained a timetable for the consideration of those items.

9. The first group of agenda items — items 18, 87, 88, 89 and 12 and 90 — related to the question of decolonization. In that connection, he drew the Committee's attention to the aide-mémoire circulated to the Committee containing the provisional list of documents relating to those items. An addendum to the aide-mémoire would be issued.

10. With regard to agenda item 81, "Effects of atomic radiation", the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation was contained in document A/53/46.

11. With regard to agenda item 82, "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would be issued in document A/53/20 in mid-October and the report of the Secretary-General in document A/53/265.

12. With regard to agenda item 85, "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects", the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had been issued as document A/53/127.

13. With regard to agenda item 83, "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East", the Commissioner-General's report would be issued as document A/53/13. The note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine would be issued in October, as would the related reports of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 52/59 to 52/63.

14. With regard to agenda item 86, "Questions relating to information", the report of the Committee on Information had been issued as document A/53/21. The reports of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 52/70 B and 52/220 would be issued in October.

15. With regard to agenda item 84, "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories", the reports of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 52/64, 52/67 and 52/68 had been issued as documents A/53/259, A/53/260 and A/53/264. The Secretary-General's report pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/65 would also be issued shortly. The note by the Secretary-General transmitting the Special Committee's report had been issued as document A/53/136 and the addenda to the report would be issued in late October or early November.

16. The Committee's programme of work and the timetable proposed in document A/C.4/53/L.1 had been prepared as a result of his consultations with the relevant delegations and the substantive units of the Secretariat and also took into account the availability of documentation and the number of meetings available to the Committee. He believed that the Committee would be able, without any difficulty, to complete its consideration of all the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly within the time-frame reflected in that document.

17. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) noted that most of the documents relating to decolonization had not yet been issued. He wondered how that could be reconciled with the six-week rule regarding the circulation of documents. Not enough time remained before 5 October, when the next meeting of the Committee was to be held. It was his understanding that there was a rule that the General Assembly could refuse to consider an item if the relevant documentation had not been issued.

18. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt) noted that at previous sessions the agenda items corresponding to the current items 83 and 84 had been considered consecutively. He wondered why at the current session consideration of those items had been split up.

19. **Mr. Sattar** (Secretary of the Committee), replying to the question put by the representative of Egypt, said that consideration of the agenda items in question had been split up because of technical problems within the substantive units of the Secretariat responsible for the issues which fell under agenda items 83 and 84. As for the question raised by the representative of Morocco, the delay in the publication of documents was due to the fact that documents were not received in time from the units responsible for producing them. The Secretariat made every effort, but its resources were limited still further by the fact that it had to deal periodically with additional urgent reports.

20. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that, despite the United Nations reforms aimed at increasing its efficiency, there were still problems regarding the timely issue of documentation. He was not criticizing the Secretariat, since it was a matter of collective responsibility. It was absolutely essential for the Secretariat to have the proper resources to issue documents on time. The matter should probably be drawn to the attention of the General Assembly.

21. **The Chairman** said that he would shortly be meeting with the President of the General Assembly and would raise the issue with him then. With regard to the remarks made by the representative of Egypt, he acknowledged that he had not noticed that agenda items 83 and 84 had been split up in the programme of work, but asked the representative to agree that the two items could be considered at the times proposed.

22. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt) said that his delegation had no problem with considering the agenda items in question either consecutively or separately. He wished, however, to know the nature of the technical problems mentioned by the Secretary.

23. **The Chairman** said that the problems were simply that the heads of the substantive units responsible for the issues in question would not be available at one time or another to attend the meetings of the Committee and participate in the consideration of the items.

24. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that a decision on the issue should take account not only of the technical but also of the political factors, namely the desirability of considering the agenda items in question together.

25. **The Chairman** said that he would try to resolve the problem with the Secretariat. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee approved the programme of work and the timetable contained in document A/C.4/53/L.1, subject to the points raised by the representatives of Morocco, Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic and taking into account the provisional nature of the timetable.

26. *It was so decided.*

27. **The Chairman** said, in connection with agenda item 49, "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)", which would be considered by the General Assembly, that the Committee would hear bodies and individuals which had an interest in the question. The Committee would be informed if requests were received.

28. With regard to agenda item 82, "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", the Committee would, as at previous sessions, set up an open-ended working group, presided over by the representative of India, to prepare a draft resolution. He suggested that the Committee should establish the working group immediately so that it could begin its work without delay.

29. *It was so decided.*

30. **The Chairman** noted that by approving the programme of work and the timetable the Committee had decided to hold one general debate covering agenda items 18, 87, 88, 89 and 12, and 90. That decision would enable members of the Committee to speak on all the items or on any specific item at any given meeting.

31. At previous sessions the Committee had considered the chapter of the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples relating to military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories in conjunction with the item on foreign economic interests. He took it that the Committee wished to follow the same procedure at the current session.

32. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.